Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

# Wasatch Mountain Junior High School 200 East 800 South Heber City, Utah 84032

**April 25-26, 2005** 



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

# THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

# Wasatch Mountain Junior High School 200 East 800 South Heber City, Utah 84032

April 25-26, 2005

### UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

# DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

Christine Kearl, Associate Superintendent

Brett Moulding, Director Curriculum and Instruction

Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist Curriculum and Instruction

Salt Lake City, Utah

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#### **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 25-26, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Wasatch Mountain Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Dennis M. Bacon is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Wasatch Mountain Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Wasatch Mountain Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Patti Harrington

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Sara V. Sinclair\*

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# WASATCH MOUNTAIN JR. HIGH SCHOOL

## **ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

## **School Administration**

Dennis M. Bacon	Principal
James Judd	Assistant Principal

# Counseling

Colleen Cummings	Counsel	lor
Jason Watt	Counsel	lor

# **Support Staff**

Saundra Lowther Lisa Sessions Valerie Sweat

# **Faculty**

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Nathan Belcher	Jesse Hennefer	Ashley Painter
LuAnn Brandt	Erin Heywood	Amanda Porter
Melissa Bulloch	Glen Holmes	Sue Pyper
John Clinton	Leslie Huntsman	Gina Shelley
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Daniel Drew	Cari Knapp	Scott Ward
Christine Garloch	Jennifer Mayo	Elaine Witte
Jennifer Gilliland	JoAnn Memmott	

#### WASATCH MOUNTAIN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

#### MISSION STATEMENT

Wasatch Mountain Junior High School seeks to create a collaborative environment where the diverse backgrounds, talents, and ideas of student and staff generate learning experiences that promote social, ethical and intellectual growth for life.

#### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

#### We believe:

- Students have worth, unique talents and abilities, and are entitled to be nurtured, accepted, and treated with dignity and respect.
- Students' education should include intellectual, emotional, social, physical and moral development.
- Student-Teacher-Parent-Community collaboration is essential to student success, and all share the responsibility for learning.
- Developmentally responsive teaching strategies are necessary for student motivation and success.
- Students are responsible for their own behavior and have the right to experience the consequences of their choices.
- The educational process occurs best in a learning environment that is safe, inviting, and positive for all.

## MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Christine Huley, Ed.D., Professional Learning Department, Granite School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Vickie Bingman, Central Davis Junior High School, Davis County School District

Charlie Nielsen, Orion Junior High School, Weber County School District

#### VISITING TEAM REPORT

#### WASATCH MOUNTAIN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE** 

Wasatch Mountain High School is located in Heber Valley. The school serves students throughout the county including the towns of Heber City, Midway, Daniel, Charleston, and Wallsburg. Both the valley and the school have experienced growth during the past ten years. Wasatch Mountain Junior High School embraced an 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> grade configuration in 2000. This was due to enrollment changes over the years that resulted in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade moving to the high school and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to a new middle school. The enrollment has been stable over the past five years with approximately 600 students. Forty different classes are offered, and many of these are in partnership with the high school. Three years ago the administration, Community Council, and faculty examined the CRTs and SATs and adopted a school improvement plan. This plan has been assimilated with the accreditation plan. In the fall of 2000, after 18 months of study, the school adopted a middle level philosophy to better address the needs of the young adolescent. As a result the school has organized classes, students, and teachers in smaller learning teams. Wasatch Mountain has several projects that focus on the needs of the students. Examples of these are inclusion, a pilot grading and remediation program, PASS (Positive Alternative to School Suspension) and after-school tutoring. A myriad of clubs support the interests of students; these include sports activities, dance, foreign language, student leadership and journalism.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

Data revealed from the profile that eight percent of the students are from ethnic minority groups, the largest of which is Hispanic. The Hispanic population consists of forty students and increases every year. The students represent a wide range of socioeconomics. 174 students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The mobility rate is fairly low, with nine percent (or 57 students) only enrolled in school for less than 170 days. Sixty-three students have special needs and have IEP or 504 accommodations. Enrollment has remained fairly stable, with approximately 600 students since 2001. Both male and female populations have also remained stable, with an average of 300 of each gender since 2001. The average daily attendance remains high, with students attending an average of 94 percent of the time. The student-teacher ratio is 26.4. Few instances of school suspensions have occurred; however, incidents that required suspension increased during the third quarter.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Wasatch Mountain Junior High School provided a thorough profile that addressed student achievement, student support, extracurricular programs, educator certification, and demographic and community data, as well as opinion survey data from students, parents, and school staff members.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

Wasatch Mountain Junior High School should continue to disaggregate data to identify the specific curricular concepts individual students need to master. The school documented standardized testing results as provided by the USOE; the challenge is to disaggregate the data one step further to identify individual students and learning needs. Interventions can then be aimed at specific students and/or groups of students.

### **CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

- a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?
  - Parents, students, and teachers were involved in providing input to the self-study, as evidenced by their involvement in the NSSE opinion surveys, focus groups, and others vehicles of communication. These included accreditation information in newsletters and parent/teacher conferences. The teaching staff has been engaged in the process for the past two years. Faculty meetings and professional learning time have been dedicated to this process.
- b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?
  - The staff was able to articulate the school's strengths and as well as focus areas for high levels of student achievement. Departments assessed the school data through the lens of classroom effectiveness and provided evidence that supported high quality teaching strategies. In the focus groups, the entire staff and many parents demonstrated evidence for the degree of system-wide effectiveness. The action plan was aligned with the areas that surfaced as needs for student learning.

# CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Wasatch Mountain Junior High School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

- 1. Students will demonstrate competent literacy skills through effective reading comprehension, writing, speaking and listening.
- 2. Students will demonstrate understanding of numeracy.
- 3. Students will be critical thinkers and problem solvers.
- 4. Students will demonstrate skills in technology.
- 5. Students will appreciate diversity and demonstrate the attributes of responsible citizenship.

#### Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
  - There is evidence that the administration and teacher leadership facilitated conversations with the staff and parents to develop the school's mission and belief statements. Frequent meetings were held to develop these documents based on the learning needs of the students and their future educational needs. There was also evidence that parents and students were involved in these discussions. Meetings involved the whole faculty, as well as small committee work.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
  - The belief statements clearly demonstrate that the faculty is committed to the educational needs of its students. Specifically, the staff expressed that the developmental needs of young adolescents, a safe school environment, and collaboration among students, parents, teachers and community are essential to promote high levels of student achievement.
- c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?
  - The mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning. The DRSLs were identified through a process that included collecting and analyzing parent/student/staff surveys and studying student data. As result of this analysis the DRSLs were developed and adopted by the staff and stakeholders. The Visiting Team commends the school for targeting higher-order

thinking skills as a focus for student achievement. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff and stakeholders consider reframing the first DRSL, i.e., replace "competent literacy skills" with "effective communication skills." This phrasing would expand the somewhat narrow meaning implied in the DRSL as currently written.

### **Curriculum Development:**

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure that the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The school faculty, along with the school district, has worked together and has developed a quality curriculum that is based on clearly defined standards for student learning. Faculty members align the curriculum with standards as outlined by the State Core Curriculum.

Members of the Math Department have been involved in a district-wide effort to more closely align district curricula with state standards. This has led to a curriculum map that outlines teaching strategies for core concepts. The Math Department has also been involved in developing quarterly tests designed to measure progress toward Core Curriculum standards. The Language Arts Department is beginning a similar district-wide process. The Social Studies Department has also developed quarterly assessments to measure progress toward core standards.

As the number of students with diverse learning needs increases, faculty members face the question of how to best adapt the curriculum to address the needs of a diverse population. Some efforts made in those areas include the increased number of teachers with ELL endorsements. Teachers have been challenged to develop curriculum modifications that will help the learning of the diverse learning groups. Staff members have received training in the layered curriculum model as well as in the teaching of reading strategies.

Areas of strength in the curriculum area include mapping. The Math Department has been a leader in this area. Other departments are following its example. This leads to the additional strength of assessing what students know. The Math Department gives common assessments, and other departments are in the process of designing such assessments. Another area of strength includes teachers clearly communicating learning expectations to students.

Teachers have also made efforts to develop cross-curriculum units. One such effort culminated in a school-wide multicultural unit that combined the contributions of many different departments.

Through the school's advisory program, students are receiving extra help in reading and math skills. Reading strategies taught in advisory can be used by all teachers to help students become better readers in the content areas. Teachers can also use advisory lessons to address specific curriculum needs to groups of students, such as gifted and talented, ELL, and resource students.

Wasatch Mountain Junior High School teachers make a concerted effort to communicate curriculum standards to parents and the community. They also inform parents and community members of ways in which students meet or exceed standards.

Teachers at Wasatch Mountain Junior High are confident that curricula can be strengthened through a continued effort to develop rigorous standards for all students while recognizing the need to adapt to the needs of individuals.

Departments use data from both standardized and classroom assessment to monitor, evaluate, and renew the curriculum. Areas of weakness are identified and lessons are planned to strengthen student performance in those areas.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The faculty of the school is pleased with its progress toward the effective implementation and articulation of the curriculum, and continues striving toward the school's desired results for student learning. On a school-wide basis, Six Trait of Writing skills have been introduced, and teachers across grades and subject levels are encouraged to use this model to evaluate and teach writing. While recognizing that work must continue in this area, staff members acknowledge the need to further unite in efforts to help students be better writers.

Through a common planning period, teachers in core areas have opportunities to discuss and plan cross-curricular lessons. They also have opportunities to share insights into student strengths and weaknesses, as well as insights into teaching strategies that can address student needs. They put the DRSLs up on the walls of their classrooms and work to implement them into the different curricula they teach.

Teachers have opportunities as teams to share methods, resources, ideas, and materials to help one another with the creation of new lessons that address current student needs. Teachers also have opportunities to meet as departments to talk about the DRSLs, address specific curriculum issues, and plan needed improvements. This is supported by district-wide efforts with vertical teams to align curricula. Departments have also been able to work together before and after school and during specified retreat times to better align curricula across grade

levels. For several departments, this has resulted in the development of quarterly tests to measure progress toward curriculum goals.

## **Quality Instructional Design:**

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

The Visiting Team observed the professional staff members using a wide variety of effective instructional strategies within their classes. Some of these were collaborative exploration of topics, multimedia presentations, hands-on activities, classroom discussion, independent student exploration, direct instruction/lecture format, Socratic seminars, role-plays, portfolio evaluation, and cooperative leaning groups. The staff described the support and encouragement they receive from the district and administration to continue to grow and increase their knowledge of teaching techniques. Teaming is another platform through which staff member implement additional teaching strategies.

Levels of expertise in teaching strategies vary among staff members. It is recommended that the staff continue to explore and share effective strategies. They are encouraged to find alternative ways to implement new strategies.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

Advisory offers an additional block of time for teachers to address the academic as well as emotional needs of their students. An honors group was observed where the instructor was implementing higher-level thinking.

In order to address the different learning styles of students, teachers were observed using various methods of instruction such as technology exploration, hands-on projects, student-guided instruction, group learning, and student-led lectures.

Block scheduling, in conjunction with teaming, allows teachers to adjust the time period to meet the need to do a specific subject or project. This ability to adjust time allows for increased collaboration and cooperation between teacher and students.

Inclusion has been a major focus in this school for many years. This process allows for increased learning with all involved stakeholders. It is recommended that the school continue to address the learning needs of students through increased exploration of learning strategies.

Differentiated curricula have been presented to staff members. This process is being used to a limited extent, and it is encouraged that it continue to be addressed.

As the population continues to become more diverse it is recommended that, when possible, added staff members gain ESL endorsements and share these strategies throughout the faculty. Continued collaboration between staff and ESL endorsed teachers is recommended.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The school offers Positive Alternative to School Suspension (PASS) as an opportunity to prevent interruption of the educational process due to behavior consequences. It also serves as a way to address the needs of students who are academically at risk. The administration, faculty, and self-referral may be used to place a student in this program.

Academic Support is a program that allows students to replace an elective with an additional class in core subjects in which they are struggling.

Interventions for school success and Trust Land funds support an after school tutoring programs offered to the students. Teachers work after school tutoring students in their subject area. During the time of specific projects increased hours and days may be offered by teachers.

Students expressed their appreciation for teachers who offer additional help and assistance both before and after school. The students are aware of the extra time teachers invest to help them succeed in their academic growth, especially when subjects or concepts are difficult.

Advisory class serves as another opportunity to receive additional assistance with school of work challenges. During this time a student can review his or her grades and missing assignments. If students require additional assistance, arrangements can be set up for them to meet with their teachers.

School grading structure allows for "As", "Bs", "Cs" and "Fs." A failing student is given a two-week period in which to address a failing grade. The focus of this grading procedure is to raise the students' awareness of being responsible for their work.

#### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

Departments are developing quarterly assessments based on core standards to evaluate student achievement during the year. End-of-course assessments are a guiding force in addressing the needs of the schools. These assessments have been used to address the school's plan of action. Faculty members expressed the frustration that comes from the intense focus on core testing. They believe that this focus distracts from the use of authentic assessments. The staff is working toward identifying assessment instruments that can be used to provide feedback for DRSL implementation.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

The staff has a strong understanding of the use of multiple types of assessments in evaluating student performance. Some departments are working with "backward design" in the development of Core Curricula for their courses. A variety of assessments are continually used in order to have a clear knowledge of what students know and what they have yet to learn.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

The students discussed the caring and safe environment the staff has created for them at school. The Visiting Team is confident that this does and will continue to include fair and equitable assessments for all students. Assessments are used to analyze the learning of students in case subject material needs to be readdressed.

## **Leadership for School Improvement:**

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The leadership at Wasatch Mountain Junior High extends beyond the administrative team. The principal encourages the staff and parents to be involved in the decisions that affect student learning. Through the focus group and departmental analyses, the staff and parents became aware of the organizational (systemic) and departmental contribution to the overall functioning of the school. The Visiting Team suggested that the school may want to maintain the focus groups as a vehicle for continuous school improvement. A professional development committee comprised of department representation has been instrumental in identifying skills teachers need to address the learning needs of students.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The school leadership utilizes data and research based decision making. They also use a variety of data sources, including standardized test results and perceptual data, to drive instructional, professional development, and program decisions. The school leadership needs to continue to further disaggregate data to get obtain a clearer idea of who is learning and who is not. In departments, teams, and whole school meetings, data is used to monitor student progress and identify learning needs of students.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

Standardized testing results are reviewed and used to monitor student achievement. This occurs on a regular basis in departments and teams. Benchmark assessments are being constructed, and the Visiting Team recommends that a school-wide assessment to measure mastery of the DRSLs be a focus during the next six years.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The allocation and use of resources are aligned with school goals. Teachers, students, and parents commend the administration for their support and implementation of policies and practices that ensure a positive, safe learning environment for all students. The school leadership encourages open dialogue to solve problems and create conditions for high levels of learning.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The leadership is aware that the allocation of resources needs to be aligned with the DRSLs and the school's goals. As the school community refines the DRSLs and continues to work toward school improvement goals, the resources will become more strongly aligned.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The school leadership strongly welcomes and supports involvement from the school community. The School Community Council and parent organization are committed to finding resources that support the needs of the school. Teachers welcome parents into the school and are encouraged to be a part of the decision-

making process. Parents give input through surveys, at school/community meetings, and in traditional settings such as parent/teacher conferences.

## **Community Building:**

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school

School administrators and staff share a common vision for Wasatch Mountain Junior High. This is reflected in the mission statement, belief statements, and desired results for student learning. These documents were produced through teacher student and community collaboration. Team meetings are held on a weekly basis. Individual student needs, classroom management issues, and planning for improvement in student learning are considered in these meetings. The school's efforts to develop a shared mission, vision, and values have helped it to form a cohesive faculty that promotes social, ethical, and intellectual growth in the lives of the students.

New teachers are provided with a mentor teacher to offer support and guidance. Teachers within a team often have the opportunity to observe each other in the classroom as well as share teaching strategies with the observation period and team meetings.

Curriculum collaboration within teams, departments, and across grade levels results in increased educational experiences for students.

Students have the opportunity to build peer relationships through participation in lunchtime intramurals, and organizations such as GATERs and the Latino Club.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

Students at Wasatch Mountain Junior High have many different opportunities to learn with the help of the community. The school reaches out to the community, and the community responds with its own resources. Over seventy community volunteers come to Wasatch Mountain Junior High each year to help staff "Reality Town," in which students experience a real-life simulation.

To make the best use of the facilities at hand, the students at Wasatch Mountain Junior High can walk to the high school to take high school courses. The teachers also provide weekday tutoring before and after school.

Wasatch Mountain Junior High fosters community building by having two annual parent-teacher conferences. Teachers and counselors also do yearly academic reviews with students and their parents. Goals are set, test scores reviewed, report

cards analyzed, and graduation requirements discussed. The school also provides postcards for teachers to send home to parents notifying them of the good work their students are doing in class. Teachers participate in IEP meetings and Academic Reviews. Counselors meet with parents and students to do SEOPs. Teachers communicate weekly with parents through e-mail and an article in the local newspaper (*The Wave*). Three teachers represent the faculty on the Community Council. A school counselor also serves as a non-voting member. The teachers have developed e-mail banks to keep parents informed of classroom and school activities. Phones have been provided for teachers in their individual classrooms to help them communicate better with parents. Two foundations are actively involved in the improvement of the school. The Wasatch School District Foundation is involved in providing grants for teachers and scholarships through fundraisers.

Teachers have improved the relationship between the school and community with the implementation and creation of teacher websites. Their goal is to have every teacher create and update his/her website by the end of the 2004-2005 school year. The building is also used for numerous student-sponsored events, all of which draw the community into the school.

As with all schools, Wasatch Junior High School is are working very hard to improve attendance at parent teacher conference and involve previously uninvolved parents. Additional instruction for parents on the use of SIS and teacher web pages would also be beneficial. The PTSA is involved in events, but could potentially be utilized more.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and on going professional development programs focused on the schools goals for improvement?

A Professional Development Committee is in place to address the needs of the school. Each member of the Professional Development Committee represents a department. This committee meets once a month. The Professional Development committee makes decisions on what will occur on the district "set aside" days for professional development. Ongoing training is provided for teachers to achieve the district goal of all teachers using an active web site to improve communication with parents, students, and fellow teachers. The school has a number of programs in place that support continuous improvement and learning. These programs include training in the Six Traits of Writing, ongoing training in technology and implementing reading skills in content areas, as well as departmental representation on the Professional Development Committee and coordination of preparation times to facilitate collaboration.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

Each year the administration and counselors coordinate preparation time for teams. This has been successful in all of the eighth grade and for the core subjects of ninth grade. Collaboration is occurring in team meetings to share best practices, subjects being taught, areas of improvement, and student support. Through the advisory program teachers are learning to implement reading skills in their content areas to improve the reading scores to prepare for the Utah Basic Skills Competency Test, and these best practices are also shared during teaming.

Wasatch Mountain Junior High teachers are highly self-motivated to improve their teaching styles through conferences and workshops. This shows that there is a desire for continuous improvement. The administrators provide financial support for conferences and workshops. They also provide time and material for teachers to be able to observe their colleagues and study their teaching methods, classroom management skills, and student-teacher relationships.

Regular faculty meetings provide teachers with lessons for their advisory periods to help prepare 9<sup>th</sup> grade students for the UBSCT and for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to strengthen their reading skills. The school also uses the Garfield District curriculum to better social skills.

# CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high /middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

### **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The action plan addresses five areas of concern for the leadership and faculty of Wasatch Mountain Junior High. These areas directly link with the five desired results for student learning and are data-driven. Two areas that directly affect student achievement are literacy and numeracy. Best practices, such as the Six Traits of Writing and the emphasis on reading strategies in all curriculum areas will be areas of professional development and implementation. Concurrently, an assessment system for the DRSLs will be designed and implemented. The action

plan also addresses the need to focus on critical thinking, diversity, and technology skills. The action plan is thorough and addresses the current learning needs of the students.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The school community has been involved in determining areas of improvement for the students at Wasatch Mountain Junior High. There is a consensus among the faculty, administration, and parents that these five areas are critical for their students. The action plan is thorough and purposeful. The Visiting Team suggested to the school leadership team that these five areas—literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, diversity and technology—be prioritized.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

The action plan provides a timeline, resources, assigned personnel, and progress indicators. The leadership team has identified data and evidence that will be collected to monitor school improvement efforts and evaluate their effectiveness.

# CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the staff for its commitment and dedication to implementing an effective accreditation process. The process included opportunities for parents, teachers, and students to be involved, and for the leadership of the school to support the staff in a collaborative process of selfreflection.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on its connectedness and caring for the students of Wasatch Mountain JHS. This is demonstrated by the amount of time invested in activities, support programs, clubs, and meaningful learning experiences, as well as interaction with the students.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on its use of data to design and implement academic and support programs that meet the needs of the young adolescent. Examples of these include advisory, academic support, teaming, inclusion, honoring student voices, and the school's commitment to continue to work collaboratively and with a school-wide focus, for the benefit of students and their learning.

- The Visiting Team commends the staff on its commitment to be life-long learners, and to grow professionally through formal continuing education, conferences, visiting other schools, and sharing best practices with colleagues.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on its commitment to the growth and development of the young adolescent physically, emotionally, intellectually, and aesthetically.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on the manner in which it encourages parents and the community to participate and give input on the school's ongoing process of self-improvement.

## **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school community develop indicators and an assessment tool to ensure the desired results for student learning are being implemented consistently in every classroom and school-wide. In addition, the Visiting Team recommends the school staff revisit the Utah Life Skills to refine the desired results for student learning.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school leadership team create a professional learning design to increase and support the transfer of best practices in every classroom and address the increase of diversity and learning needs of the young adolescent. These include strategies in differentiation, integrating curricula, ongoing effective team strategies, and authentic assessments.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff reinforce and support a safe school environment by increasing adult visibility in the halls, and assess the social needs of students to adjust and revise concepts taught in advisory. In addition, coordination with the counseling center staff to address emotional-social needs of students through support groups and class presentations is recommended.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue to focus efforts on how to increase parental awareness and involvement in their students' academic progress and activities.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue to work collaboratively to implement the action plan.